



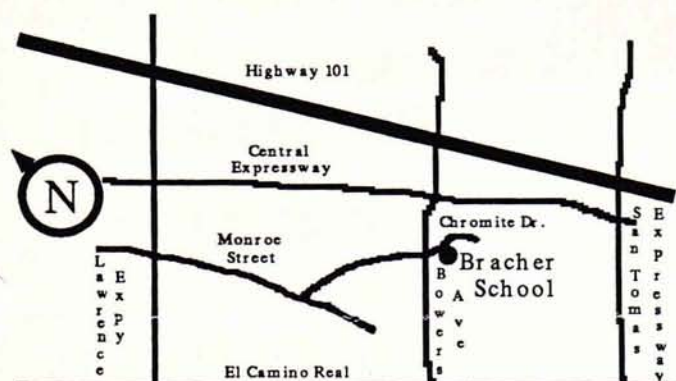
Bay
Area
Atari
Users
Group

\$2.00
USA

NEWSLETTER

October 1987

ATTENTION ! Meeting Location



Next Meeting - Monday - NOV. 2, 1987

Bracher School Cafeteria

Corner of BOWERS & CHROMITE

in SANTA CLARA, CA

from 7:00 P.M. to 9:45 P.M.

B.A.A.U.G. Roster of Officers:

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Vice-President:

Kathy Standifird (408) 739-4920

Secretary:

Simon Cotton (408) 296-1620

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8-Bit: Bill Richerson (408) 446-2242

ST: Bruce Coleman (408) 288-7376

Document Librarian:

Doug Thompson (415) 961-0353

Bulletin Board & Sysop:

Greg Kranich (408) 358-1520

Newsletter Co-Editors:

Joe Fischer (408) 988-3065

Frank Nagle (408) 720-8131

Program Chairman:

Alex Tweedly (415) 424-8190

Member-at-Large:

Sue Tempey (415) 967-7629

Past President:

Frank Nagle (408) 720-8131

Baag was founded by
John Crane & Clyde Spencer

Inside This Issue:

- o MEGA ST's
- o Meeting Minutes
- o Finally - SX212 modem

- o P.C. Ditto
- o Knarf's Korner
- o And Much More ...

MEGA ST's

The Mega St has arrived in Florida !!!!!!!

The Melbourne Computer Show, Sept 25-27,
Melbourne Florida

The Irishman's Software, Inc.
(305)-777-8257 will display the recently
arrived 4 meg RAM Mega ST computers.

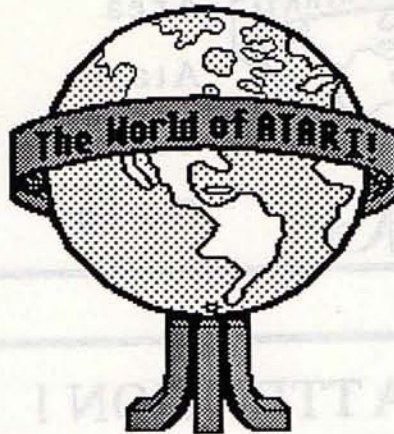
Inside we found the Blitter chip, 4 banks of T1000-10 (1 megabit IC's) a battery backup clock, 2 (TW O) sockets for some kind of external interface. There is a slide in the case (Approx 2" x 1") for some future THING to come out of the case. In some preliminary graphics timing tests (eyeballed!!) the bird flew across the screen at least 2X faster with the blitter turned on. Oh yes you can turn the blitter on/off via the mouse and a desk acc which is built into the machine. The fan is really quiet! The blitter, I think, is a flat pak IC, therefore how would one mount it in a present 520/1040????????????????????

The detachable keyboard which the mouse must plug into (you really knew that that would happen as the keyboard has the CPU that reads the keyboard and the mouse) is much better than the 1040. It is attached via a telephone type coiled cable.

BAD FEATURE!!!! Why the Hel* did they put the ON/OFF and RESET switches in the back of the frick*n thing!!!! Minor point which probably will be corrected some day. But most people, like us attach the computers and accessories via a surge protector mulitplug outlet and turn it all off via it.

THANK YOU ATARI FOR SUPPLYING US
WITH THE 4 MEG MACHINE FOR THE
GREATER MELBOURNE FLORIDA
COMPUTER SHOW !!!!

The Irishman's Software, Inc.
1022 Highway A1A
Satellite Beach, Florida, 32937
Florida's Complete ATARI dealer, GAME
machines and cartridges. 8 Bit computers
520/1040/Mega ST computers



NEW DATABASE

The Informer:

A Graphic Database is now shipping!

List Price \$99.95 US

(\$19.95 Trial Pak demonstration)

Available: Now

Systems: Atari 520ST, 1040ST, Mega2,
Mega4

Misc: International language support

We weren't looking for a small improvement over the existing database file managers for the Atari ST. We were shooting for a major new system that pushed the ST's powerful features to the limit. No other database for the ST has The Informer's impressive graphics ability or its ease-of-use.

Other databases restrict your Atari ST's incredible graphics capabilities. With The Informer you can use graphics and pictures from DegastM and NeochromeTM in a form or as data in a database.

No programming is required to use The Informer. Easy point-and-click functions are used to create and manipulate any of up to four databases simultaneously. Information is stored in a database like a spreadsheet. The mouse is used to control the layout of columns. A programmable data entry screen allows each record to be added, changed, or deleted.

The Informer is a powerful database.

Sub-lists of information may be developed using statistical and relational operators. Records may be sorted according to content, type and in ascending or descending sequence.

Customizing reports is as easy. Just point and click the mouse. Reports and graphics may be printed as they appear on the screen.

Included with The Informer are several example databases that you can start using immediately. The large manual includes a complete tutorial.

The Informer is compatible with data from Habaview™, Regent Base™, and dBMan™.

We even have a demonstration disk with examples available for only \$19.95, the cost is good towards a purchase of The Informer.

The Informer: A graphic database of unprecedented power.

Regent Software
7131 Owensmouth, Suite 45A
Canoga Park, CA 91303
(818) 882-2800
Contact: Frank Cohen, Marketing

ATARI NEWS UPDATE

Reprint from ZMAG71 September 18, 1987

From GENIE ST RT (ST RoundTable)

The Atari SX212 modem is currently shipping to Atari dealers in the USA. The first shipment arrived at the Sunnyvale warehouse during this past week.

The SX212 is a Hayes-compatible modem which operates at 1200 baud (and also at 0-300 baud). Its Hayes-compatibility extends to the S-registers.

The SX212 modem includes both the standard RS232 port and the Atari 8-bit

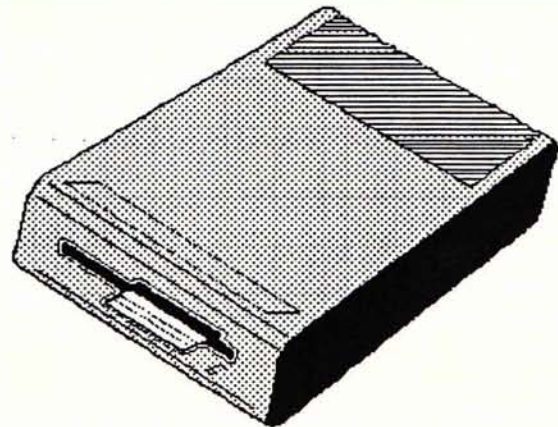
SIO port. However, 8-bit users should be aware that the software to support this modem through the SIO is not yet released -- in the meantime, the modem can still be used through an 850 or equivalent interface.

The modem package includes a power supply (identical to the 2600's), a detailed manual, and special offers from the GENie (General Electric) and BIX (Byte Magazine) online services.

To connect the SX212 to an ST or to any other RS232-equipped computer, a full RS232 cable is needed -- a 3-wire cable does not work with smart modems.

When the software is ready, Atari will market an add-on package for 8-bit users. This will contain an SIO cable and a disk which includes the modem driver and the SX Express terminal program by Keith Ledbetter.

The suggested list price of the SX212 modem is \$99.95.



Disks and Drives For the Atari ST and Mega

IBM software can be used "out-of-the-box" on the Atari with pc-ditto. Transferring data to and from 5.25-inch disks requires only a 5.25-inch 40-track drive. If the software is not copy-protected, it can be easily transferred

using the DOS Copy command, or other similar copying utilities. The capacity of the 5.25-inch disk is about 360,000 characters, while the capacity of the 3.5-inch double-sided drive is about 720,000 characters [3.5-inch single-sided is the same: 360,000]. Therefore, be sure the target disk contains enough space for you to copy your files to it.

The 5.25-inch drive is optional, and not required if all your software is stored on 3.5-inch disks. In fact, most DOS software today is becoming more popular on both 5.25- and 3.5-inch media. You can thus use 3.5-inch software without any need for 5.25-inch drive in your Atari, except for the following:

Warning: Commercial 3.5-inch DOS software is sold on double-sided 80-track disks. It can NOT be used in single-sided drives. You will need access to a double-sided drive to copy the software to a single-sided disk, if not copy-protected. Again, if the software is copy-protected, you may not be able to successfully use it without a double-sided drive.

Finally, you may purchase 5.25-inch drives (which just plug directly into the Atari or Atari drive), or you may "homebrew" your own drive. The drive consists of a standard IBM compatible mechanism, power supply, and cable. We have found that the cable is the hardest item to obtain. Below are the names of drive and cable manufacturers for which we have tested and recommend their products.

Also, the cost of a fully assembled drive with warranty and drive software is usually not any less than the cost of "do-it-yourself" approaches. Especially because many drive mechanisms have been found NOT to work reliably with the Atari. A fully-assembled drive takes the worry and frustration out of getting a drive to work, and provides the assurance that the drive can be repaired or replaced if found defective or damaged.

When we are asked whether a certain brand of drive we have not tested works with pc-ditto, we usually respond by

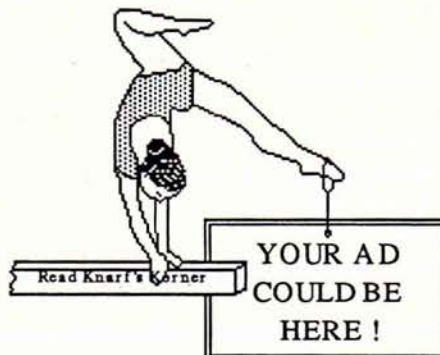
stating that if the drive connection appears to be sound and the drive works with the Atari under GEM (usually by at least displaying a directory), then the drive should work with pc-ditto. However, as with our DOS software, we can only provide assurances on those drives with which we have certified with pc-ditto.

I. B. Computers

Source of 5.25-inch drives and cables
1519 S. W. Marlow Ave.
Portland, OR 97225
(503) 297-8425

E. Arthur Brown Company

Source of cables
3404 Pawnee Drive
Alexandria, MN 56308
(612) 762-8847
(612) 763-6393



BENCHMARKS:

PC-DITTO

The following are 4 benchmarks I've performed on various people's machines and some of these results I've posted before.

The benchmarks base their speed on one of the following 3 computers: PC = PC speed against which some of the benchmarks base themselves XT = XT speed etc, etc. Should be the same as PC (I think) AT = AT speed already supplied by the INDEX benchmark

The actual testing was performed on three machines:

PCD = PC Ditto on the ST
 286 = Compaq 386 running at slow speed (6-8MHz)
 386 = Compaq 386 flying along at full tilt

I. Peter Norton's SI.EXE - Computing Index (relative to and XT):

| PCD | XT | 286 | 386 |
|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 0.3 | 1.0 | 6.9 | 17.6 |

This was probably the least reliable of the tests, since it only spits out 1 number and doesn't say what kind of test was actually performed.

II. IBM COMPATIBLE PERFORMANCE ANALYZER (c)1986 Richard B. Johnson

Relative speeds are in percent

| PCD | PC | 286 | 386 | Operation |
|-----|-----|-----|------|----------------------|
| 234 | 100 | 260 | 655 | Memory Block Write |
| 14 | 100 | 294 | 755 | Register to Memory |
| 14 | 100 | 239 | 612 | Memory to Register |
| 8 | 100 | 309 | 744 | Register to Register |
| 27 | 100 | 787 | 1600 | Divide by Register |
| 27 | 100 | 549 | 1285 | Divide by Memory |
| 31 | 100 | 788 | 1781 | Multiply by Register |
| 32 | 100 | 480 | 1210 | Multiply by Memory |
| 20 | 100 | 223 | 577 | Stack Operations |
| 18 | 100 | 204 | 519 | Far Jumps/Far Calls |
| 19 | 100 | 332 | 824 | Overall Time |

III. INDEX (c)1986 D.S. Research Inc.

Relative speeds are in percent

| PCD | XT | AT | 286 | 386 | Operation |
|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------------------|
| 26 | 100 | 179 | 212 | 538 | Jumps |
| 54 | 100 | 695 | 2155 | 3233 | Arithmetic |
| 20 | 100 | 185 | 237 | 600 | Conditional Jump |
| 95 | 100 | 267 | 274 | 709 | Memory Access |
| 24 | 100 | 200 | 241 | 610 | Call & Return |
| N/A | 100 | 200 | 200 | 299 | Hard Disk Access |

IV. Real life example - a Multiplan 3.0 Spreadsheet

Multiplan was used because it appears to handle much larger spreadsheets than Lotus does and I wanted a large spreadsheet to make the times longer.

Times in minutes and seconds

i) Fill up 100x50 blank cells with any expression:

| PCD | 286 | 386 |
|------|------|------|
| 4:12 | 0:07 | 0:03 |

ii) Recalculate the expression SQRT(NOW()*COLUMN()+ROW()) in those cells:

| PCD | 286 | 386 |
|-------|------|------|
| 17:45 | 0:35 | 0:14 |



WE
NEED
YOUR
ARTICLE!!!

GROUNDGLASS SYSTEMS: An Introduction and Preview

The Groundglass System is a software/hardware package for all professional photographers. It is being offered as a complete package, including everything needed to get up and running...the computer, the monitor (color or mono available), mouse, high speed printer, clock card, paper, disks...yes....everything needed! No extras!

The software can be purchased separately, if you have either an IBM or Atari ST. Groundglass Systems recommends the ST due to its lower price, fast operating speed, GEM desktop, and the availability of additional RAM. Current RAM upgrades can increase internal memory as much as 3 MEG! This is perfect for the Groundglass System, since it is a RAM based system, allowing fast access to a great amount of data.

Hard drives are, of course, supported....and recommended for memory intensive applications, such as stock photo files. A 20 MEG hard drive can contain up to 200,000 stock photo files. (a conservative estimate)

It was developed by New York photographer, Jerry Finzi, after more than three years of research in the area of photographer's software. Jerry has nearly two decades of professional experience, from advertising, to catalog, from small studio operations to some of the largest studios in the country. It is apparent from looking at his logical approach to the Groundglass System, that he has included a wealth of knowledge in the software.

For hardware support, his partner, Bruce Mendel (a real go-getter with expertise in every area of hardware) is fully capable of recommending the perfect hardware set-up for any application, without costing the photographer an arm and a leg. Bruce's driving force is, "A photographer shouldn't have to spend the rest of his life learning a system, and then spend the rest of his money trying to pay

for it, either!" An approach that every photographer should appreciate, due to the rising price of film, equipment, and overhead.

Their objective: an easily understood, "real world" approach to photographer's software. They have developed a system that is both easy to understand and use, as well as being affordable to the average working photographer.

The Groundglass System is not one of those "command-oriented" or "window" operated systems, but something unique...a new metaphor for the rest of us. The commands are offered in an on screen menu, and can be activated by either a click of the mouse, a function key, a keystroke, or a combination of all three....it's almost impossible to get lost in this program. There are many different approaches to on-screen help, also.

The Unique Approach: A New Metaphor

The Groundglass System is based on a visual metaphor of cards and racks. (This is similar to the Hypercard database that is currently being packaged with the MAC...Groundglass is based on Zoomracks II, a pioneer in this new area of user interfaces) The screen can contain up to 10 racks loaded at a given time, each rack containing thousands of cards, each card can contain up to 27 fields of data, and each field can contain up to 250 lines of data! Again, that's:

10 racks
thousands of cards in each rack
27 fields on each card
250 lines in EACH field.

That's a potential for a single card containing 1Megabyte!

(This would be an unlikely event, however. A typical invoice card usually contains only a few K.)

Everything is kept in cards in racks. You have a rolodex rack for clients, suppliers, models, or sales prospects, for instance. You also have a Jobfile rack to keep track of job costs, tech data, darkroom data, and

any other pertinent info for each assignment.

Output Forms and Macros

Groundglass has also included custom output forms, such as; invoices, past due notices for assignments and stock usage, schedules, personal diary, form letters (custom & user defined), inventory, price lists, production reports, pre-production estimates, assignment estimates, stock photo shipping memos, labels, envelopes, sales form letters, intro letters, and of course, many types of accounting reports. The output forms are also stored on cards in racks, like everything else in this program. There is no limit of how many types of forms you can store....and you may create your own at any time!

The other powerful features offered are powerful, custom MACRO commands, also stored in racks. Again, there is no limit of macros, and although Groundglass Systems has provided all the macros to do all of your daily tasks, these can be added to at any time by the user.

(For those who don't know what a "macro" is: A macro is like a tape recording of a series of complicated commands, which is played back when you execute the proper keystroke. With the Groundglass System, you simply press "F7" (get ready to DO Macro) and then an initial that represents the task you need accomplished. Ex; Press "F7", and then "T", and the macro automatically "T"otals your job file expenses. All tasks are done in this way; to write a letter to a selected client: "F7", "W"rite; create an invoice from the job file info: "F7", "I"nvoice, etc.)

A Sense of "Place"

The racks and cards concept is truly a "real world" concept, unlike anything you've seen on a computer's display. It gives you a real sense of "place"....If you are on a card in your rolodex rack, calling a client, and he asks you about a current job.....click over to the "Jobfile" rack and simply "Zoom in" on the card for his job....Done! You have a sense of having

worked with this system before, perhaps you have a rack hanging on your wall right now, with jobfiles sitting in each slot...you simply reach out and pull a file (or card) out of the rack! It's the same thing with this program. In fact, Groundglass has discovered that when giving on-site demos of the system, the photographers seem to understand the display in one or two minutes! In essence, anything that you are doing in the "real world" with paper, pens, calculators, typewriters, xerox machine.....are done with the Groundglass System!

Searching

The search functions are really fast....if you type in "Thanksg" in the "event" field of the "Schedule" rack of cards, it will find the card that contains "Thanksgiving" in LESS than a second! And that's without typing in the whole word! You can search any field on any rack, whenever you wish. You may also do a "Search-Lock". If, for instance, you need to send a party invitation (as a form letter) to all of your clients, you would simply go to the "Type" field on any Rolodex card, enter "Client" (or any other code word you choose for "Clients") and press "F8" (do search). This will find the first card it comes to with the word "Client" in the Type field. Then press, "SHIFT F8" (search-lock), and you will have all of your clients cards listed, separated from any other "Type" of rolodex cards. You would then print all of your invitations in one shot! Think of the possibilities! You could search-lock for any "uncollected" invoices, or any cards which contain the word, "Editorial" in the selected field. You'll never lose track of information again!

Math & Calculations

Another powerful feature are the math capabilities. The macros that Groundglass has supplied use these features to calculate "set" charges, total job expenses, calculate account receivables; but you may also use these math features at any time. It is possible to automatically add all the lines of a field (up to 250!), or total ALL of the cards in a particular rack (on the "Propping" field, for example) in a

second!

The calculator is available at any time from the numeric keypad on the computer's keyboard. This is not one of those "drop down" calculators, and does not work with the mouse! Let's face it the mouse is great for some applications, but why should it slow you down for "real world" adding or multiplying? The totals can immediately be inserted in a field at any time. (This is great for any last minute changes!)

Word Processing Features

Yes, it even does word processing! When you are writing a letter to someone, for example, you would enter the "Zoom-Edit" mode. You would be now working with a word processor, with word wrap, reformatting, margins, insert or typeover modes, and more!

Additional Features

You may send the output of only one card, or an entire rack to the printer at any time! Output can be sent to the display for a preview, the printer, or you may output any field, card, or rack to an ASCII file....to be used in other applications such as telecommunications! You may even send the output to another field!

The program allows display of any Degas compatible file. This feature, combined with a digitizer and a hard drive allows for the possibility of a VISUAL database!

The program can insert the date or time automatically into a field, or a line in a field at any time. The Groundglass Macros do this automatically for any invoices, late notices, etc.

ASCII files can be imported (loaded) into the program.

Groundglass Systems offers FREE updates, as new features are added. On-line support is being planned. The hardware/software set-up comes with the free STARTER KIT; including mouse mat, printer cable, 1000 sheets of form feed paper, clock card, in fact...everything to get

started with the Groundglass System!

The instruction manual is a mere 44 pages long! You will probably be doing your first invoice in a few short hours.

Templates Description:

The JOBFILER; Basic studio management, containing racks for client/sales/suppliers files, job tracking, invoicing/receivables, a rack for correspondence, schedule, price lists, stock inventory, equipment inventory, custom forms, and custom macros.

The PRODUCER; A combination Production Invoicing and Production database (includes 500 make-up, hair stylists, assistants, prop houses, modelmakers, set designers...N.Y area), Automated searches, manual searches, custom forms, and custom macros.

SALESCALL; A dedicated database for sales prospects, includes 500 top N.Y. area agencies, art director lists, appointment tracking, type of work done, accounts handled, appointment schedule, dedicated form letters, labels, user defined form letters, correspondence files, custom forms, custom macros.

STOCKFILE; A dedicated stock file management template, with Stock request forms, order forms, usage invoices, late notices, "holding" notices, stock search lists, user defined picture files (up to 80,000 with a 20 meg Hd Drive), each picture file contains info on format, previous, sales to date, conflicts of use, tech data, and the custom macros keep track of exactly the number of file copies, and copies out. Custom forms and macros included.

BOOKEEPER; A "real world" way of bookkeeping. With many types of reports, summaries, and ledger totals. Two checking accounts supported, double entry system. Custom forms and macros are included.

So there you have it! This package is a completely new approach in studio management. Now it's possible to have an entire studio management set-up for the

price of the software alone!

The Groundglass System will be the subject of an upcoming article in the nationally distributed Photo District News, and will be making its debut at the PHOTO EXPO EAST in the Javits Center in N.Y. in November.

Its going to be selling like hotcakes in N.Y., so call them soon for more info...This one is really worth it!

For more info:

GROUNDGLASS SYSTEMS

(212) 255 2111
36 west 20th Street
("in the heart of the Photo District")
N.Y.C., N.Y. 10011
Or leave mail on CIS for Jerry Finzi;
764 10,267
FREE DEMOS are offered in the N.Y. area!

Editor's Note: I receive this letter from Don Wilhelm after the last newsletter had been put to bed and so I saved it for this time.

Don's Letter and a Reprint of an Article from the Penninsula Times Tribune

August 31, 1987 Dear Joe,

Perhaps excerpts from this article on Atari's purchase of Federated Group will be of interest for a future newsletter. This is the first optimistic article that I've seen on the purchase. Every other one is predicting that Atari will go down the tubes for sure now.

(Don had a nice comment on the laser printed newsletter too.)

Don Wilhelm, BAAUG



Reprinted from the
Penninsula Times Tribune
Palo Alto, 8/31/87

Tramiel's business smarts will have Atari in the Bucks

By CONTRARIAN Sam Bernstein

"Atari agreed to buy Federated Group, an electronics retailer, in a bid to boost shelf space for its low-priced personal computers." The Wall Street Journal announced last week.

The move was greeted coolly by analysts.

The analysts were variously quoted as saying such nonsensical things as, "You can't buy your distribution, you have to earn it." And, "Others who have tried it have failed miserably, including IBM." Not to mention, "Atari's purchase of Federated will confuse the stock market and, consequently, analysts won't follow the company as closely."

The truth is that Jack Tramiel, Atari's chairman, bought Federated. Tramiel has a strong retail background, which no newspaper I read even remotely acknowledged.

I first knew Jack Tramiel when he ran the business-machine concession at Macy's in New York. That was almost 30 years ago; he was a customer of a very callow young typewriter salesman. Me.

If you had walked into Macy's to buy a typewriter or a calculator, you'd assume you were buying it from Macy's. You weren't; you were buying it from Tramiel and his fledgeling company, Commodore Business Machines.

Tramiel was running it pretty much by default: The original concessionaire practically gave the business to him after having purchased large amounts from Commodore and then lacking the ability to pay for the stuff.

Somehow Tramiel managed to turn the concession into a profitable entity.. And the Macy's concession became a force to be reckoned with in the New York

business-machine market, one of the toughest markets in the world. So he had been able to cut costs to the bone while increasing sales and, consequently, profits. And the lion's share of the sales were in Commodore products.

A decade later, early in the '70s, Tramiel had moved his Commodore operation to what is now called Silicon Valley. He had said at the time that this is where the technology would be; New York was only where the sales were. And technology would be more important than sales. (He never used the word, "marketing." You make the stuff and you sell it. Case closed.)

By now he was out of the retail business. If memory serves, he had sold it profitably. He was firmly in a new phase of his business: low-cost electronic calculators. Ever the seizer of opportunities, he had latched very early onto what would become a major product category.

Tramiel and Commodore may very well have been the first to introduce the low-cost electronic calculator and, later, the low cost LED (light-emitting diode) watch. You remember -- the watch where you had to press a button then squint to read the red digital numbers. Then, even later, came the Commodore PET, arguably the very first complete personal computer.

All through these years in the '70s, Tramiel believed that if he were to give all the customers more for less -- more product and more features for less money than the competitors would or could-- the dealers would be forced to carry his products.

He was extremely frustrated that it didn't seem to work out that way; the orneriness of the dealers marred the simplicity of the credo.

So he opened a number of Mr Calculator stores in the mid '70s, from the Bay Area to Texas. At one point, there were probably a dozen stores, all dedicated to selling Commodore products and, thereby,

to show the way to other retailers.

But, unlike the way he ran his product development and his manufacturing, he had to delegate responsibility and authority to others to run the stores. And the stores were never run right. All were closed by the early '80s.

With all this in mind, let's take a closer look at the purchase of Federated. First of all, \$67 million for a retailer that had \$480 million in sales sounds like a good buy,. Federated is in the top dozen or so electronic retailers in the country in terms of sales. As a reference point, Federated's sales last year were about double the sales of The Good Guys and Macy's California combined.

Now let's say that Tramiel can cut costs, -- as he can do with brio -- and turn the retail operation from a \$5 million loss to a 5 percent profitability before taxes, a reasonable figure. That would be \$24 million in ~~one~~ year. Not too bad for a \$67 million investment. Because his No. 1 son, Sam, is pretty much running the day-to-day business at Atari, Tramiel could have time to supervise Federated.

But let's go a step further. Nobody can buy product in the Far East the way Tramiel can buy; he has proved it year after year. My money -- such as it is -- says that singlehandedly he'll be able to buy electronics better than the whole Zenith and RCA/GE staffs put together. So I see an Atari brand line of electronic entertainment products sold in Federated. At a profit

So, if the stock analysts -- and Jack Tramiel -- are listening, let them hear me say it to him, "Go forth and multiply thy assets," Nobody could do it better.

Sam Bernstein is a Santa Clara antagonist and the president of CL9 in Los Gatos. Letters to Bernstein are welcome and may be addressed in care of the Times Tribune, Business Section, 245 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301

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ATARI SCUTTLEBITS

Bob Kelly

After an all too brief vacation, I am back at the typewriter.... oops, keyboard! It was an enjoyable reprieve, spent mostly in Canada. Of particular interest on the trip was James Bay where the first English settlers arrived at Moose Factory, Ontario during the 16th Century. The Canadian people, as always, were very hospitable (this is my fourth vacation in Canada). If you've never been, go while the exchange rate remains favorable. My only regret while in Canada was that Glen Brown from the Ottawa Atari users group visited Washington, D.C. I never met Glen in person although we talked numerous times over the telephone. I was informed Glen is an amateur magician of some acclaim and look forward to his next trip or rather performance in this area. He is so good that he even made a Mega ST appear while in town (not only Atari can create illusions).

Preparing for this column was difficult not only because of the vacation blues, but also the Atari market is rather uninteresting. No Mega ST has appeared in the U.S.A., no laser printer, no Atari IBM/PC compatible, and no 80 column cartridge nor 360K disk drive for the 8 bit enthusiasts. Atari has maintained in their public statements that the hardware will be coming any day (I hope before the holiday buying season). Atari's pronouncements and the unswerving loyalty of many users reminds me of a quote from Shelley:

"Life may change, but it may fly not;
Hope may vanish, but can die not;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth;
Love repulsed, - but it returneth!"

Genie's, Atari ST-Roundtable:

Over the past year or so, several individuals have said to me in one way or another, "Bob, learn while having fun, join one of the real time conferences (RTC) either on CompuServe or GENie. There are

conferences/forums for almost any interest a person may have." As you probably know, Atari is now directly associated with GENie and runs the Atari 8 and 16 bit forums. If what I heard was true, it was time to stop doing research for this column the hard way - magazines, newspapers, and books. I downloaded several files of past ST Roundtables. Once printed, the few files amounted to hundreds of pages of text. I was momentarily dismayed, but doggedly determined to continue.

After reading the material, I had to ask myself whether this was an easy method of obtaining information? Further, were particularly insights gained which could help an individual user or supply more time sensitive material for this column.

In order to evaluate opinions I will present later, the reader must first be familiar with the dialogue, RTC text. A caveat, Atari recently attempted to improve both the quality and organization of the weekly ST RTC. Depending on individual likes, the change may be viewed as positive, away from total chaos, to negative, corporate propaganda. Let's begin by looking at some old dialogue from the ST Roundtable of May 27, 1987.

<TP>Is there a list of Magic Sac Public Domain software posted?
<G>Check with us at the end of June ok?
<DS>uploaded a test rev., tonight; we will see how it does. Probably more
<HH>1989 right?
<R>Why can't I de-arc ST_Index.ARC on one disk without getting a disk full mes
<DS>fixes to put in before it's ready.
<GM>Thanks G, I will do that
<K>F... what's the progress in splitting up the phone lines at Atari BBS?
<G>I was really hoping for the year 2000.
<DS>I don't think so. Current Notes probably has the best one right at the moment.
<D>Hi guy...
<DS>That you Billie joe?
<H>Hi!
<MJ>Hi!
<SJ>R.... the file may be dearcng into a file that's too big for the disk, use a ramdisk

an dearc from that/

After reading this short excerpt, are you confused? Imagine reading for hours pages of text structured in this form. In reality, this is a particularly good excerpt since two questions were answered in a short period (the general rule appeared to be one answer to a substantive question every five pages). Can you find the Q & A's? (Remember when you use to draw lines between the dots.)

Now, along comes Neil Harris for Atari. There is no doubt, reading the transcript is easier. The text is coherent, consistent, and surprisingly, information is readily available to the user. Again, a few representative examples of dialogue from the conference conducted on August 5, 1987.

{Andy Eddy} KIDX>

Thanks, Neil. Two quick ones: Has the Mega pricing been set? And what effect PC-comps have on the Atari PC strategy?

<NHARRIS>

Yes, we've set the retail pricing on the Mega ST computers ... the Mega ST2 will sell for \$1699 with monochrome, \$1899 with RGB; the Mega ST4 is \$2399 with mono and \$2599 with color. Please keep some things in mind regarding these prices:

1. they are suggested list.
2. we're improving dealer margins, so the numbers may seem.. a little high now.
3. These are the numbers today.

I really can't comment on the new Tandy systems until I know more about them.

{Steve} STAPPLIC>

Two questions: Any info on the new ST resolutions and is the TI graphics co-pro for use in the ST. 2) Will Business Lan

<NHARRIS>

Sorry Steve, nothing to announce at this time. And we're talking to several chains, but, again, we're not ready to announce any deals at this time.

{Darin} D.LEGAL>

Any news on the 32bit unit(s)? And will

they run Unix or the like

<NHARRIS>

Come on folks, ask something we can answer!!!

We're not really able to comment on unannounced systems...

{Nevin] N.SHALIT>

Now that WordPerfect is almost out, is Atari aware of or helping any other big n developers for the ST... I love my Hard

{Julius] J.OKLAMCAK - Atari>Nevin, we are "working on it" <big grin>

Well, the difference is pretty obvious, isn't it? The old format was a sure prescription for developing a migraine. Now if you want information on Atari's current line of products, you will get answers both from the technical and market perspectives. If you want answers on future products and/or market strategies, don't bother to ask the question. If you want to talk about rumors, this is not the place. Quite frankly, this policy makes sense. Why should Atari discuss its corporate strategy for new products in a public forum?

Finally, some further clarification to questions posed implicitly or explicitly. Is this an easier way of obtaining information? For 95% of my needs the answer is ...no. Would I frequently participate in real time conferences? It is doubtful. Would I download the transcripts from the Atari RTC's in the future? Yes, but only under specific circumstances e.g. when new Atari products are introduced to the market and information needs are time constrained. Incidentally, I have assumed experienced Atari users most often read this column; new ST users might find more utility in the RTC's.

SEE YOUR NAME IN "LIGHTS" - well at least in **BOLD TYPE!!!** Write an article for the NEW LETTER TODAY!!!



Knarf's Korner

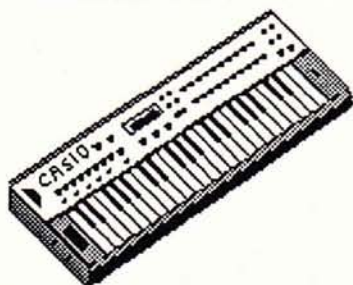
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It's here...It's here... the Hard Disk driver for Magic Sac!!! I was finally able to obtain version 4.52 of the Magic Sac driver, and lo and behold, the Hard Disk is supported. This is a big step forward in using the Atari as a MacIntosh. With a single double sided drive, it seemed like I was forever swapping disks whenever I tried using the Magic Sac. NO LONGER. I set one of the partitions on my hard drive to about 4 meg, and loaded most of the Mac programs I regularly use into that partition. The system works extremely well, and I find myself using it more and more lately.

One of the nice programs on the MAC is the game called 1000 MILES. It is based on the

Mille Bourne (1000 Miles) card game, and is a Shareware product. The game works exceedingly well, and I find myself in front of the monitor for an extended period of time whenever I start up this game. With most of the bugs worked out of the latest release of the Magic Sac software, I find the system up and running most of the time. Even when I do encounter a piece of software that causes the system to bomb, it no longer takes "hours" (so it seemed) to re-boot the system. Just restart from the Hard Drive, and seconds later I'm ready to try again. Anyone who has a Magic Sac should take the time to investigate the latest release, especially if you have a Hard Drive, it well worth the time to install it on your system.



MIDI and the ST

Recently a musician friend of mine came by with his synthesizer and we spent a Saturday morning just seeing what the Atari ST was capable of. Well, he certainly was impressed with the power of the system without

the price! Having himself looked at different systems being offered for MIDI, he was suitably impressed with the sounds we were able to create in a short period of time. He commented that the ST was a music studio in itself. He felt that with a little work on his part, he could create a tape which could be taken to a professional studio and recorded for distribution. Just one more example of the power of the new ST system.



XFORMER

Remember all that GREAT 8-bit software you gave up when you moved to the ST?? I know I had quite a collection of programs, including some nice games and graphics disks that were unusable on the ST. Well, NO LONGER!!! The release of the public domain program XFORMER now provides an 8-bit emulator for the Atari ST. It will run only on the color system, and it is slow at times, but the familiar **READY** prompt was like homecoming to me when I ran it for the first time. It is available on some of the national services, and will be available at B&C.

HOT-LINE / HELP-LINE

Gordon Anderson (408) 247-4794 Eves. New Users Group/SIG

Richard Anderson (408) 281-8139 Eves. 7-10 Ques. ranging from Telecommunications to Letter, Data & Spell Perfect. Geneology SIG.

Loretta Colbourn (408) 972-4456 General questions.

Bruce Coleman (408) 288-7376 Eves 8-11 except Thurs. 8-bit General Use, BASIC, BASIC XL

John Crane (408) 268-7317 days, 447-6804 eves. general computer questions, BASIC & FORTH.

Gary Furr (mail only) P.O.Box 1073, Mountain View, CA 94042-1073; questions on Atariwriter & printer drivers.

Rich Lewis (408) 985-0251 Eve. 6-9 BASIC, Atari Desktop, Atariwriter, ACTION, 8-bit general.

Gene McCreary (408) 629-7494 eves. 8-9:30, general computer use. BASIC, ASSEMBLY.

Mike Morrow (415) 570-7478 Personal Pascal for ST
Steve Quigley (408) 297-4790 eves. 8-Bit Beginners and Educational Software, general questions.

Bill Richerson (408) 446-2242 Speedscript, BASIC, ASSEMBLY, 825 & 1020 Printers, Electronics Projects/parts & help.

John Schreier (408) 281-8930 eves. 6-9 ST questions.

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